

SENATE RECORD VOTE ANALYSIS

105th Congress
2nd Session

Vote No. 193

July 9, 1998, 10:23 p.m.
Page S-7869 Temp. Record

HIGHER EDUCATION/Academic Major Requirement for Teachers

SUBJECT: Higher Education Act Amendments of 1998 . . . S. 1882. Bingaman/Cochran amendment No. 3116

ACTION: AMENDMENT REJECTED, 23-74

SYNOPSIS: As reported, S. 1882, the Higher Education Act of 1998, will reauthorize and amend numerous Federal higher education programs.

The Bingaman/Cochran amendment would require States and higher education institutions to require each undergraduate student preparing to be a secondary school teacher to complete an academic major in the subject he or she intended to teach, as defined by the institution which he or she attended. Most Federal higher education aid would be denied to States and higher education institutions that failed to adopt this requirement within 3 years of the date of enactment of this Act. Federal grants and loans to students would not be affected by this requirement.

Those favoring the amendment contended:

Secondary school teachers cannot effectively teach subjects that they themselves do not understand. Taking extensive classes in education just is not enough to prepare one to explain nuclear particle physics, differential calculus, or the intricacies of constitutional law. According to a recently completed analysis of State level student achievement data, students who have teachers with both teaching certificates and academic degrees do significantly better in school than other students. The findings are consistent, regardless of income or ethnicity and regardless of whether English is the first or second language of the students. Further, secondary school teachers who are assigned subjects to teach that they themselves have not been taught become discouraged and quit teaching at a much higher rate than other teachers. Only 28 out of 100 new teachers who do not have academic majors last more than 3 years as teachers; in contrast, 75 out of 100 new teachers who have academic majors last more than 3 years. Thirty States have a requirement that students receiving a postsecondary education teaching degree must also complete an academic major,

(See other side)

YEAS (23)		NAYS (74)		NOT VOTING (3)	
Republicans (3 or 6%)	Democrats (20 or 45%)	Republicans (50 or 94%)	Democrats (24 or 55%)	Republicans (2)	Democrats (1)
Cochran	Biden	Abraham	Helms	Akaka	
Domenici	Bingaman	Allard	Hutchinson	Baucus	
Lugar	Boxer	Ashcroft	Inhofe	Breaux	
	Bryan	Bennett	Jeffords	Byrd	
	Bumpers	Bond	Kempthorne	Cleland	
	Conrad	Brownback	Lott	Dodd	
	Daschle	Burns	Mack	Feingold	
	Dorgan	Campbell	McCain	Feinstein	
	Durbin	Chafee	McConnell	Glenn	
	Ford	Coats	Murkowski	Graham	
	Harkin	Collins	Nickles	Inouye	
	Hollings	Coverdell	Roberts	Kennedy	
	Johnson	Craig	Roth	Kerry	
	Kerrey	D'Amato	Santorum	Kohl	
	Moseley-Braun	DeWine	Sessions	Landrieu	
	Reed	Enzi	Shelby	Lautenberg	
	Reid	Faircloth	Smith, Bob	Leahy	
	Robb	Frist	Smith, Gordon	Levin	
	Torricelli	Gorton	Snowe	Lieberman	
	Wellstone	Gramm	Specter	Mikulski	
		Grams	Stevens	Murray	
		Grassley	Thomas	Rockefeller	
		Gregg	Thompson	Sarbanes	
		Hagel	Thurmond	Wyden	
		Hatch	Warner		

EXPLANATION OF ABSENCE:

- 1—Official Business
- 2—Necessarily Absent
- 3—Illness
- 4—Other

SYMBOLS:

- AY—Announced Yea
- AN—Announced Nay
- PY—Paired Yea
- PN—Paired Nay

and 2 States have comparable requirements. The other 18 States do not have any such requirements. Each year the Federal Government spends \$1.8 billion to support education training programs, including programs in those 18 States. Considering the amount of money being spent, we do not think that it is too much to ask that at a minimum the States require secondary education training programs to have an academic major requirement. The Bingaman/Cochran amendment would just make the minimal, commonsense demand that postsecondary school teachers should receive training in the subjects they expect to teach. It would be totally up to the States and the schools to design the courses. For \$1.8 billion in aid each year, it is not too much to ask of these 18 States.

Those opposing the amendment contended:

Our colleagues are correct that prospective secondary school teachers should complete an academic major, but the Federal Government should not threaten to withhold aid from States that do not impose such a requirement. The much better approach, which is followed by this bill, is to encourage those 18 States that have not yet moved in this direction to do so by offering them financial incentives. Additionally, we are concerned that the Bingaman/Cochran amendment could hurt our States even though they already have the types of laws that are sought by the amendment. Our colleagues do not believe that our States would be affected, but we are not so sure. For example, Connecticut's law applies only to certain subjects. Language teachers are exempt from the requirement, because in the judgment of that State it is not necessary for that subject area. We do not think that we should necessarily second-guess Connecticut, which has teachers who are consistently rated among the best in the country. Again, the purpose of this amendment is laudable--it is just that we cannot support its punitive approach. Therefore, we urge its rejection.